



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

TESTIMONY
of
Laurie Julian
Before the Aging Committee
of the
Connecticut General Assembly

February 16, 2010

Chairpersons Senator Edith Prague and Rep. Joseph Serra and Honorable Members of the Aging Committee my name is Laurie Julian, Public Policy Director of the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter. I am here today to testify **in support** of Section 1 of H.B. 5111, An Act Concerning the **Alzheimer's Respite Care Program** and ask you to **re-open this essential program**.

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hour, 7 day a week Helpline.

Currently in Connecticut there are approximately 70,000 residents who have Alzheimer's and related dementias with over 113,000 caregivers. Those caregivers, usually family, provide over 97 million hours of unpaid care that would equal over a billion dollars. The Respite program allows many of these families the time they need to keep their loved one home.

The Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, commissioned by the legislature,¹ reports that informal caregivers are family and friends who provide care without pay, and are the primary source of long-term care. The importance of unpaid care provided by family and friends cannot be overemphasized, as it constitutes the back bone of the long-term care system.

Unfortunately, this comes at a price in terms of compromising the caregivers' health. Due to the specialized care required of Alzheimer and dementia patients, we hear from caregivers who endure overwhelming stress and are at their breaking points.

For many, the grants awarded through the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program has extended the patients' care allowing them to continue to live at home while it affords the caregiver much needed relief, permitting the caregiver to maintain employment outside the home.

Respite care is one way to help delay nursing home care and is far less expensive than the alternative. Nursing home will easily cost \$70,000 a year. Respite care equates to both taxpayer savings and a better quality of life for the Alzheimer's patient. Several patients who are on the waiting list since the program officially closed May 11, 2009 to new applicants, have landed in nursing home care.

There were over 900 families served by this program last year, a 24% increase. The program has achieved results in relieving stress on caregivers and preventing premature nursing home care institutionalization.

¹ Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment (P.A. 06-188) is the first comprehensive statewide study to help guide crucial planning and was funded by the Connecticut General Assembly.

In sum, the program is a small investment and saves the state millions of dollars, while protecting the care of the Alzheimer's patient and caregiver.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Laurie Julian, Director of Public Policy

(860) 828-2828 x27, laurie.julian@alz.org